

COASTAL PROGRAM PDC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Virginia Coastal Resource Management Program (VCRMP) Technical Assistance (TA) grants enable Virginia's Coastal Planning District Commissions (PDCs) to offer targeted technical assistance to coastal communities and education and outreach to local governments, industries, organizations and the public. Through these grants, PDCs provide a coordinated regional approach to coastal and environmental planning, and programming and management. These activities are maintained through a network of local and regional environmental planners, working alongside state agencies to implement the elements of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA), wetlands and dune management, storm water management and other programs, which assist in meeting the goals set forth in the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

COASTAL PDCS ENHANCE THE STATE'S ABILITY TO DELIVER COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (CRM) INFORMATION AND SERVICES TO THE LOCALITIES

Regional Point-of-Contact

Coastal PDCs serve as the regional points-of-contact for state and federal agencies to disseminate information and technical assistance to local governments within the coastal zone and to collect information about local conditions and programs. Many PDCs host local government meetings and workshops for state and federal agencies on a variety of environmental issues such as Tributary Strategies, the Virginia Clean Marina Program, the Natural Heritage Database, the Virginia Base Mapping Project, State and Federal Wetlands Regulations, Low Impact Development, Land Conservation, Watershed Management, Storm Water Management and Sea Level Rise. Additional training sessions have been held on Geographic Information Systems (GIS), watershed management, erosion and sediment control regulations and techniques, the environmental impact review process, mitigation banking, habitat restoration, wetlands delineation, storm water management, septic tank management and the CBPA regulations and implementation issues. Workshops and training programs frequently gather staff from state and federal agencies together with staff from local government, private business and non-profit organizations for a more regional and broad-based exchange of information.

Not only does the VCRMP TA Grant Program support assistance directly to coastal communities, but it also provides a cohesive network involving state agencies that are considered officially to manage the core program elements of the VCRMP and the eight Coastal PDCs. Through the Coastal PDC membership on the state's Coastal Policy Team, information exchange is enhanced. The PDCs in turn provide a direct link between the program and the eighty-four local governments in the State's coastal zone.

Linking of the VCRMP and Chesapeake Bay Program goals and implementation activities directly back to local government has been an essential function of the network. PDC staff serves as supplemental staff support for member localities. They serve to bridge the gap between federal and state initiatives and local and regional implementation. PDCs effectively disseminate information about CBPA implementation activities between state agencies and local governments.

For example, the Northern Neck Planning District Commission (NNPDC) has hired Regional Environmental Inspectors (REIs) to serve the counties and towns within the region. They work cooperatively with state and local government to reduce non-point source pollution by working with county land use staff, town managers, and the four wetlands boards to provide assistance in review, implementation and compliance for the CBPA Erosion and Sediment Control regulations, and the Wetlands Act. This example was featured in the Joint Legislative Audit Review Commission (JLARC) Draft (October 15, 2002) of the Implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act.

PDCs coordinate and support VCRMP and Chesapeake Bay Program activities through the development of regional priorities for the implementation of the CBPA. Development of Tributary Strategies and the coordination of local government elements are a sizeable component of PDC efforts. During 2001 and 2002, the PDCs coordinated development of local input to the Annual Report of the Secretary of Natural Resources to the Governor and General Assembly. In support of meeting Chesapeake Bay Agreement commitments for watershed planning, PDCs work with state agencies to develop programs which assist local governments and community watershed organizations to develop watershed management plans, emergency hazard mitigation plans, nutrient reductions and water supply planning. PDCs also serve as a regional resource for technical information and analysis which aids state agencies with several initiatives including the Nutrient Cap Strategy document.

PDCs participate in and represent their regions and member governments in meetings and workshops covered under the Regional Cooperation Act, the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, and the Chesapeake Bay Agreement 2000 (C2K) as well as participating as members of the Metro Areas Work Group, the Communications and Education Subcommittee, the Local Government Advisory Committee, and others. These efforts allow staff to continuously update local planning staff of new and timely CRM information. One commitment of the C2K Agreement called for revising the Local Government Participation Action Plan which attempts to ensure more input from local governments into meeting the commitments of the Agreement. PDCs actively participated in coordinating the revision process for this Plan.

Not only are Coastal PDCs involved in the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Watershed, but also the Hampton Roads and Crater PDCs are active participants in watershed management initiatives being conducted by the State of North Carolina through the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuarine Program. At the northern end of the State, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) represents the interests of Virginia jurisdictions through the Commission's participation with the State of Maryland and the District of Columbia in Chesapeake Bay Program and Tributary Strategy activities.

While PDCs are actively networking outside of the Commonwealth, they also provide a vehicle for reaching the technical staff resources at each of the other PDCs in the State, but in particular the seven PDCs that fall within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, that are not within Tidewater, Virginia. On a regular basis, when issues are watershed-wide in nature, those PDCs coordinate with the eight coastal PDCs.

Regional Data and Environmental Review

As Virginia Data Affiliates, PDCs are the regional repository of data and reports received from local, state and federal agencies. PDCs are the clearinghouse for GIS analysis of environmental resource features. This information, often disseminated at the state level, is passed to local governments to assist them in developing their GIS capabilities and aids in the creation of an up-to-date regional environmental database. Data included in a GIS database are: wetlands coverage from the National Wetlands Inventory, natural heritage resources, FEMA floodplains, soils, slope, and existing and future land use. The PDCs also serve as clearinghouses for non-GIS data, such as aerial photography, socioeconomic data and transportation information, facilitating the linkage among all of these disciplines.

The PDCs coordinate local review of state and federal environmental impact assessments and statements, pending state and federal environmental permits and determinations of coastal zone consistency. The number of such reviews varies widely across the coastal zone and annually. Updates are often distributed to member governments through newsletters which include brief articles on a variety of issues relating to the Virginia Coastal Program and other state environmental initiatives. Monthly status reports on environmental issues are distributed to their Commissions (local elected officials and Chief Administrative Officers) through the Meeting Agenda Packages and briefings.

Planning Technical Assistance

Since the inception of the VCRMP, Virginia's eight coastal PDCs have established or enhanced environmental planning programs that provide continual technical assistance to local governments within the coastal region. PDCs develop Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department (CBLAD) compliant comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances and other local regulations for communities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, including technical assistance to support implementation efforts. The TA Program recently has been used to supplement limited funding provided to the localities by CBLAD. In all cases, the localities achieved consistency with the CBPA Regulations.

Additional technical assistance is seen through local government and community outreach projects. PDCs participate with local governments, state agencies and community groups to produce products that increase the awareness of the Virginia's coastal watersheds and promote environmentally sensitive land development. Several examples include a guide that explains the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and provides information on water quality protection through BayScaping and residential best management practices, workshops on ecotourism and new or modified regulatory initiatives, maps and trail guides to the Bay's rivers and estuaries.

PDC ACTIVITIES DEVELOP CONSENSUS AND PROVIDE A FORUM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT INPUT INTO DEVELOPMENT OR REFINEMENT OF STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act

Virginia's Coastal PDCs have assisted state agencies consistently since the Coastal Program's inception by developing consensus among coastal local governments and enhancing the State's commitments to the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). PDCs coordinated regional efforts to participate in development of the C2K. Educational meetings were held, regional committees developed technical input and a statement of principles, and analysis of the impacts of the Agreement on local governments was conducted. PDCs participate in the deliberations of the CBP Urban Storm Water and the Development, Redevelopment and Revitalization Work Groups. Information is conveyed to the localities and their input is provided to the CBP.

PDCs continue to coordinate the watershed's local governments through meetings to address CBPA program development and implementation. During the last several years, positions and comments have been developed on revisions to the CBPA Regulations, JLARC Report, and related guidance and procedures. PDC or local government staff from these regional committees serve on a number of CBLAD committees to assist in program development.

Assisting local governments with the CBPA implementation occurs through preparing and administering grant applications, requests for proposals, reviewing local site plans and development proposals for environmental impacts, preparing and assisting with updates to local codes and ordinances; assisting with tributary strategy implementation, and conducting other associated technical assistance efforts as requested. These efforts directly enhance the state environmental programs through the strengthening of local programs.

Virginia Tributary Strategy Program

Coordination of local government involvement in the State's Tributary Strategies Program begins with PDCs. This has included meetings of regional Tributary Strategies Project committees, participation in the state strategy development process, analysis of local government programs to reduce nutrient and sediment loadings, development of management options to meet strategy goals, education for local officials as well as private citizens and businesses, and participation in Tributary Strategy meetings and watershed forums or roundtables. PDCs frequently hold additional workshops and develop educational materials targeting regional constituents.

Wetlands Regulations

Many coastal PDCs host Wetlands Advisory Committees and actively participate in the development and review of state wetlands legislation and regulations. As a result of PDC committee efforts, several public and private representatives from various regions served on the State's Technical Advisory Committee. The State's initiative resulted in the enactment of comprehensive wetlands legislation and regulations for Virginia. Technical support is continually provided through the regional process to local governments.

Erosion and Sediment/Storm Water

Regional efforts have played a similar role in the initial development of state Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) Regulations, State Storm Water Management Act and Regulations, Storm Water Permit Program, and General Permits for Cooling Tower Discharges and Construction Activities associated guidance.

Many coastal localities have expressed concern about the number of individual annual reporting requirements established by the state ESC and storm water management programs. Facilitation of regional efforts to develop an alternative approach to reporting which integrates and complies with all of these state requirements will contribute to the enhancement of the state program as well as local programs.

Virginia Ground Water Management Program

PDCs, working with member local governments, have made consistent efforts to improve the Virginia Ground Water Management Act and its implementation by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Working with member local governments, PDCs have requested the State Water Control Board to enhance the Virginia ground water withdrawal regulations, extend the regulations to agricultural use, and resume water quality and quantity sampling of ground water monitoring wells. The PDCs and their committees have also provided testimony to the State Water Commission regarding the need to better manage ground water. Through separate local funding, some PDCs also provide financial and technical support to DEQ and U.S. Geological Survey research and monitoring programs in efforts to enhance the Coastal Plain Model, the State's primary tool for managing ground water in the Coastal Plain.

Watershed Planning

PDCs, because of their technical expertise, resources and regional focus, facilitate watershed planning. For example, the conduct of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission (RRBC) and its various work groups is a collaborative process of reviewing and recommending policy positions for the localities of the basin and the General Assembly. This process has been recognized across the Commonwealth and by national groups and federal agencies as a major contribution in the deliberate development and refinement of water policy within the basin, including water quality, water supply and water related natural resource issues.

Another example of PDC support of watershed planning is the coordination of the Dragon Run Special Area Management Plan and its supporting committee. Ongoing support of the Dragon Run Steering Committee has been provided through the Middle Peninsula PDC (MPPDC). This committee is comprised of elected local government representatives and landowners within the watershed. The purpose of the Committee is to support planning and management of the environmental, social, and economic resources within the Dragon Run Watershed. The Committee initiated the Dragon Run Special Area Management Plan in 2002. This project seeks consensus to support and promote community-based efforts to preserve the cultural, historic and natural character of the Dragon Run, while preserving property rights and the traditional uses within its watershed.

In support of Virginia's efforts to meet Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals for watershed planning, the NVRC worked with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on the development of a technical guide. The guide is intended to assist Virginia localities and watershed groups in developing consistent and comprehensive watershed management plans. NVRC, representing local governments, also participated with DCR in the development of a series of workshops for locally-based stakeholders.

Beginning in 1991, the HRPDC coordinated an effort involving the Cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach as well as several state and federal agencies to develop a cohesive

management approach for the Southern Watersheds. In 1994, this effort led to the establishment of the Hampton Roads Southern Watershed Special Area Management Program (SWAMP). Through separate VCRMP funding, a series of comprehensive technical studies and consensus building efforts have been completed. Memoranda of Agreement on water use conflict education and improvements to the wetlands compensation process have been developed with state and federal agencies. Information and recommendations are being used by the two cities in updating their comprehensive plans. These studies also supported development of an Agricultural Reserve Program in the City of Chesapeake.

PDC ACTIVITIES HAVE LED TO THE CREATION OR ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PROGRAMS FOR OUR REGIONS

Recreation and Preservation Programs

The Accomack-Northampton PDC (A-NPDC) provided extensive technical assistance to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) in planning and developing the Virginia Coastal Birding and Wildlife Trail. The A-NPDC attended regional planning workshops, prepared site nominations and maps, coordinated with landowners and local government representatives, assisted the birding trail consultants with field work, and assisted with distribution and installation of birding trail signage. The birding trail is an excellent new program in the region that is encouraging sustainable tourism and improved management of public and private conservation lands.

The Rappahannock River Basin Commission and its Development Impact Work Group have been working in support of others to promote the use of Low Impact Development as an alternative storm water management approach for water quality protection. Stafford County has now modified its ordinances to allow this as an alternative to traditional detention pond systems. Other localities are at various stages of studying this alternative, including Spotsylvania County, Fredericksburg City, Town of Warsaw and Essex County. The Commission encourages all jurisdictions to explore this alternative as a low cost water quality enhancement practice.

Crater PDC has been directly involved with the establishment of the Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR), a non-profit citizen group to enhance the River. Crater also coordinates semi-annual river clean up activities in the region. Through involvement with FOLAR, Crater has identified funding sources for riparian tree planting, the Lower Appomattox River Corridor Greenway/Blueway Plan, "Becoming Friends of the Appomattox River" production, Urban Forest Protection Project, trail development and Natural Resources Educational Center in Appomattox River Park.

MPPDC member jurisdictions expressed a need to manage public access on a regional basis. MPPDC staff drafted enabling legislation, gained General Assembly approval and successfully implemented a single purpose entity, the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority. The Authority's function is to manage and preserve public access across a multi-jurisdictional area.

The MPPDC also assisted in the establishment of Virginia's River Country (VRC) in 1998, a non-profit corporation committed to compatible economic development that is harmonious with the region's cultural and natural resource history. VRC ultimately became the region's economic development entity as a requirement of the Regional Competitiveness Act.

Environmental Education Programs

In 1986, when the HRPDC TA Program began, the localities established environmental education as a program priority. The program continues to focus on general environmental education, such as wetlands and Chesapeake Bay Program issues. However, it has been enhanced substantially through the establishment of several specific educational programs, through the HRPDC regional water, storm water and wastewater programs. Education programs have been developed for water conservation (HR WET), water supply protection and drinking water quality, storm water management (HR STORM) and litter control and recycling (HR CLEAN). All are supported financially and technically by the region's local governments. In 2002, the region's localities requested that the HRPDC develop a clearinghouse of environmental education materials that can be shared among the sixteen member localities. The clearinghouse will involve a library of hard copy materials as well as web links to many of the materials.

Storm Water Management Programs

During the late 1980s/early 1990s, the HRPDC conducted a series of technical studies in the area of storm water management through both its TA Program and VCP competitive grants. Based on these studies and the associated process, the region's localities established the Regional Storm Water Management Program, which is now funded through a special local assessment. The program coordinates implementation of six Virginia Pollution Discharge Elimination System (VPDES) Permits for discharges from Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) (Phase I), annual reporting on permit activities, and regional education on storm water management (HR STORM). This program has led to a more cost-effective approach to monitoring and annual reporting. In 2002, the program expanded to develop permit applications, storm water programs and coordinated implementation of six additional MS4 Permits (Phase II).

In FY01, the RRPDC established a Storm Water Management Task Force. The purpose of the task force is to discuss the public participation/public involvement requirements of the VPDES permitting process and the potential benefits to localities in the Richmond area through coordinated efforts, either regionally or multi-jurisdictionally. This topic grew from discussions at the Richmond Regional Environmental TAC meeting.

Regional Water Programs

Regional concerns about the growing need for central water supplies and wastewater treatment systems on the Eastern Shore led to the establishment of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Public Service Authority (PSA) in 2000. The PSA was created by Accomack County and Northampton County and is staffed by the A-NPDC, initially with VCP funding. The A-NPDC has assisted the PSA to secure other funding to study the feasibility of expanding the Onancock sewage treatment plant and developing a central wastewater treatment system for the towns of Exmore and Nassawadox.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Ground Water Committee was established by Accomack County and Northampton County in 1990. The eleven-member committee has been staffed by the A-NPDC through VCP funding from its inception. Over the past thirteen years, the committee has initiated and funded numerous technical studies and has provided a forum for regional cooperation in ground water protection, management, research and education. The

committee's participation at the federal, state, and local levels has resulted in the designation of the Eastern Shore as an EPA Sole Source Aquifer, has influenced improvement of the Virginia Ground Water Management Program, and has resulted in local government efforts to develop ground water protection ordinances.

Through VCP technical assistance funding and the Northampton Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) project, the A-NPDC has assisted Accomack County and Northampton County with development of draft ground water protection ordinances. When adopted, these ordinances will provide a new program of enforceable local government regulations that will protect ground water.

Following a 1993 request from the Division of Legislative Services to coordinate regional input for General Assembly consideration of water policy and supply planning issues, Hampton Roads localities renewed a coordinated approach to water supply and resource issues. A formal program, supported by a special local assessment, was established. This program coordinates planning and technical studies, legislative and regulatory involvement, service programs and comprehensive educational programs dealing with water conservation (HR WET), water quality and water supply protection. In 2001, a companion program was established to deal with wastewater issues, especially sanitary sewer overflow regulations, and grit and grease disposal facilities.

Regional GIS Resources

GIS capabilities in the PDCs were developed initially through the TA grants. Each PDC has expanded its GIS resources significantly to include not only basic coastal resource information, but extensive ground water, water supply, land use, storm water and other utility infrastructure. From the VCP grant seed, these programs have become a recognized technical resource for localities throughout the State.

MAJOR TECHNICAL STUDIES

The following major technical studies were conducted with partial Virginia Coastal Program funding and/or other funding from the Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Water Control Board, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, participating local governments and the participating PDC.

VCP Annual Report for Coastal Resources Technical Assistance Program (Yearly)

Chesapeake Bay Act implementation – Regional Mapping of Sensitive Resources to Assist with Public Policy Development (Yearly)

Technical Justification for Eastern Shore Ground Water Ordinance, 1999

Draft Eastern Shore Ground Water Protection Ordinance, 2000

Water Supply Evaluation of Economically Disadvantaged Communities, 2001

Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Commuter Toll Impact Study, 2001

Eastern Shore Ground Water Safe Yield Analysis, 2002

Managing Multiple Recreational Use Conflicts in the Waters of Hampton Roads

Lower Appomattox River Corridor Greenway/Blueway Plan

“Becoming Friends of the Appomattox River” Production

Urban Forest Protection Project

Trail Development and Natural Resources Educational Center in Appomattox River Park

James River Interpretive Map, 2002

Richmond Regional Land Use Map, 2001

Middle Peninsula PDC Public Access Site Inventory, 1999

Evaluation of Comparative Watercraft Personal Property Taxation in Middle Peninsula Localities, 2001

Gloucester County Route 17 Corridor Analysis- An Atlas of Development Potential and Environmental Constraints, 2001

Dragon Run GIS Data Management Framework, 2002

Hydrogeologic Data Summary and Needs for the Northern Neck

Study of Impervious Area in the Towns of Montross and Warsaw

Agricultural Conservation Planning Inventory of the Four Northern Neck Counties

Septic and Well Inventory of the Northern Neck

Shenandoah and Potomac Basins Interim Nutrient Cap Strategy Planning Team

Northern Virginia Definition of “Perennial Stream” and Field Protocol

Water Supply Planning Project of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission. Several study documents have been produced from this larger project, including:

- Water Supply Planning Areas
- Locating Surface Water Information
- Surface Water Data Summary
- Streamflow Stimulation
- Water Demand Forecasting
- Overview of Model and Historical Flows
- Ground Water Information Assessment
- The Rappahannock River Basin Water Supply Planning Model
- Safe Yield for Multi-Reservoir System Model

Southern Watershed Special Area Management Program, Annual reports. Also:

- Multiple Benefits Conservation Plan Memorandum of Agreement, 2002
- Memorandum of Agreement to Improve Water Use Conflict Education for the North Landing River, 2001

Preliminary Analysis of the Potential Impacts on Local Governments Attributable to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement 2000, 2000

AWARDS THAT PDC PROGRAMS OR REPORTS, FUNDED THROUGH THE VCRMP, HAVE RECEIVED

Presentations

PDCs make a number of presentations to civic and professional groups as well as local governing bodies. In addition, PDC staff participates on panels and make individual presentations at local, state, regional and national, professional association conferences such as:

- Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association
- Virginia Water Research Symposium
- Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Environment Virginia
- National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council Committee conducting an Assessment of the USACOE Methods of Analysis and Peer Review for Water Resources Project Planning
- Charlottesville Chapter of the Senior Statesmen of Virginia
- Governing Bodies for Virginia Coastal Cities, Counties and Towns
- Virginia's Roanoke River Basin Advisory Committee
- Virginia Resources Authority
- Coastal Zone 99
- Coastal Zone 03
- EPA Region 3 Shallow Waters Conference
- EPA Region 3 NPDES States Meeting
- Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program Conference
- Professional Society Regional and State Meetings.

Awards

Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Commuter Toll Impact Study, 2002 Outstanding Planning Award for a Special Community Initiative, Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association.